



INNOVATION AGAINST POISON

Quarterly Newsletter on the LIFE+ Project
“Innovative Actions Against the Illegal use of
Poisoned Baits in Mediterranean Pilot Areas”



Spring 2012 Issue

Editorial

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Last term, the LIFE IAP team counted with the visit of the European Commission, a great opportunity for the whole team to meet and talk about the development and future goals. Three days of hard work meetings which will contribute to improve the progress of the project.

It has been a hot period in Greece regarding poisoning events. The largest episode ended with six poisoned rare large birds of prey in the Strait of Nestos, an area of outstanding importance at a European level. The episode was denounced by Public bodies together with different NGO, which stated the importance of excellent cooperation in the fight against poison.

Technical assistances to the European Networks against Poison kept us busy trying to solve problems with feral dogs in Portugal and helping hunters with measures to improve rabbit populations in Spain. Schooltalks have been also an important action during this term, teaching the little ones how to prevent the use of poison.

The Innovation Against Poison Team

Environmental crime with International dimensions in the Strait of Nestos

Different NGO and Management Bodies of Protected Areas denounced the most serious poisoning incident in recent years in Greece, which ended with six poisoned rare birds of prey.

The poisoned birds, vultures and golden eagles, were found around of two wild horses shot dead in the Straits of Nestos, an area of outstanding importance at a European level for the protection of large predators and part of the Natura 2000 network.

The illegal use of poisoned baits is unfortunately a common practice in Greece, but this incident is particularly serious due to the fact that the whole animals were used as poisoned baits, which increased the number of rare species. The use of poison aims to kill carnivores such as wolves and bears, because of the damage they cause to livestock and crops. The problem is exacerbated by the failure of the State in compensating damages, the inadequate guarding in Protected Areas, the lack of mechanisms to control the movement and the use of pesticides.

Vulture is a threatened species included in the Red Book of Endangered Animals of Greece. Fewer than 30 pairs survive in mainland Greece; the Straits of Nestos host the largest colony of the species. It is particularly worrying that only by this incident has left at least, as the investigations continue, the 7%



Bearded vultures (*Gyps fulvus*) and Golden Eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*) found poisoned in Nestos.

of the total population on the mainland.

As for the endangered golden eagles, whose population in recent years has been greatly reduced, recent evidence of Greek Ornithological Society for Thrace record 30 pairs, representing approximately 20% of the national population. This population is particularly vulnerable since the incident killed three adults and one immature, which means the entire breeding population of the Straits of Nestos.

In the current economic crisis it is imperative to ensure sustainable development of local communities. The protection of unique natural wealth is the basis of this perspective. In this direction, the district has received from European

funds more than 2 million Euros for the protection of certain bird species and habitat management, while Greece participates with neighboring countries in the Balkan Action Plan for Vultures. This incident has therefore an impact of international dimensions and it finishes up with these EU efforts and neighboring countries.

The managers of protected areas of the neighborhood and environmental groups are in excellent cooperation with the local authorities and expect to find the perpetrator and exemplary punishment. This incident should be the last frame in a sad series of embarrassing images that poison the Greek nature.

National Monitoring Committee and the Illegal Use of Poisoned Baits Control Plan

The recent environmental crime in Nestos (Greece) proofed the absolute necessity of implementing the program activities. As a result, the University of Crete and Arcturos organized together a press conference to present the Control Plan of illegal use of poisoned baits and to establish the Project National Monitoring Committee.

The meeting was organized by ARCTUROS and the University of Crete in Kalambaka on February 21. It was attended by the Mayor of Kalambaka, Mr Dimitris Sakellariou, the mayor Mr. J. Zaropoulos, the mayor's councilors Mr Koufochristos and Mr D. Karakostas, representatives of the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change-Special Secretariat for the Forests, Mr. P. Drougas and E. Giakoumi, from the Forestry Department of Grevena, Mr. M. Skakas, Mr D. Drizas, from the Forest Service of Trikala and Kalampaka, Mr. D. Kalogiros and Mr. S. Mouziouras. Finally, representatives from the Directorate of Coordination and Forest Inspection of Crete and representatives from the local authorities.

The board set up the National Programme Monitoring Committee which met for the first time in order to ensure the reliability and validity of the actions and the outcomes of the program. The National Advisory Commission will help and propose further suitable measures for its implementation at local level in order to resolve the problem.

A previous fruitless attempt had taken place in 1999 in Dadia. This time the meeting was successful and consensus was achieved and so was an agreement on common actions.

Antonis Rigas, the project coordinator for ARCTUROS, pointed out the National Commission should operate after the LIFE IAP project in order to cope with the problem nationwide.

Michalis Probonas, project coordinator for the University of Crete-Natural History Museum of Crete, stressed the importance of the European Networks of hunters, farmers and municipalities against poison.

Victoria Saravia (Greek

Ornithological Society) commented their experience fighting the use of poisoned baits and how it influences the reduction in the extinction of birds of prey in Epirus. She also emphasized the importance of combining both programmes, as synergies can be developed to achieve even greater results.

According to Dr. Stavros Xirouchakis, Project Manager of the programme for the University of Crete, "The problem of using poisoned baits exists all over the world where farming is practiced and there are predator animals, especially after the formalization of the overuse (of the baits)". Crete has been chosen as pilot area for implementing the programme because it has a larger population of vultures and other raptors in relation to mainland Greece, where populations have collapsed.

The discussion ended with a great selection of pilot actions in synergy with all stakeholders to achieve the maximum awareness-raising.



School talks: teaching the little ones the importance of Biodiversity

Awareness-raising against the use of poison starts by knowing how important biodiversity is and the risks of poisons. During the past months, LIFE IAP technicians have presented the project to schoolchildren in the different pilot areas.

Our field technician Zoi Karanika, from ARCTUROS, presented the LIFE project to students of second and third degree of the City of Kalambaka Elementary School and the Primary and Secondary Schools of Ampelia and Oxyneia Kalambaka.



**KALAMBAKA
(Greece)**

Children were told about the organization and the actions carried out under the LIFE IAP project: the problem of illegal poisoning, treatment and importance of stockbreeders and hunters to prevent its use. Discussions and opinion exchanges between parents, teachers and children contributed to a very enriching day.

ARCTUROS thanks the Directors of the Primary and Secondary Schools of the Prefecture of Trikala, Mr. Kafaneli and Mr. Tselios for their kind cooperation.



**RONDA
(Spain)**



This time the project changed tables and blackboards by outdoor workshops for a different day at school. Children from different schools from Benaoján and Montecorto learned the importance of the food chain and biodiversity conservation through birdwatching workshops, lectures and field games about hazards of poison.

The activities were carried out in collaboration with Algaba de Ronda, a local company specialized in Eco-tourism,

environmental education and experimental archeology that has excellent facilities for this type of activities, such as a pond with a hide for birdwatching or farm with native breeds.

The LIFE project "Innovation against poison" offers advice and improvement of sustainable local businesses and municipal services to members of the European Network of Municipalities Against Poison (ENMAIP).

Improving habitat conditions of rabbits

One of the main difficulties for hunters in Spain is maintaining healthy populations of rabbits. As part of the technical assistances provided to members of the ENHAIP, the LIFE IAP field technicians have helped hunters with captive breeding and rabbit burrows.

Enclosures for captive breeding are used by some Associations of Hunters to recover rabbit populations in areas where the species has disappeared. This technique of self-management, carried out by the Associations independently and self-financing themselves, aims to recover the species to enjoy hunting in the future and reverses on protected species in whose diet rabbits are an essential element, setting individuals in the territory and maintaining stable populations.

Predators might be seen as one of the reasons for the decrease in rabbit populations. Covered burrows naturally help rabbit populations protecting them from predators, preventing the use of poisoned baits.

Hunting associations are often wrongly accused of this illegal practice, sometimes carried out by isolated individuals. With this cooperation, hunters make clear their position against the use of poisoned baits and their commitment to improving game management and innovation, taking advantage of the field technicians' knowledge and experience and resources provided by the project to solve their problems and improve the productivity of the hunting area.



Enclosure for captive breeding of rabbits assisted by the LIFE IAP technicians in Serranía de Ronda pilot area (Málaga, Spain)



The president of the Conquista Hunting Association (Valle de los Pedroches pilot area, Córdoba, Spain) talking to our field technician about the project



Covered burrows in the hunting area "Dehesa Boyal", where hunting activities are combined with sheep and pigs farming and obtaining wood and charcoal.

More information: Check the full article published in the magazine of the Andalusian Hunting Federation [here](#).

ENSAIP - European Network of Stockbreeders Against Illegal Poisoning

Constitution of the ENSAIP in Blachaba Kalabaka

The ENSAIP in Continental Greece was established last December in a meeting held by ARCTUROS, counting with the presence of the President of the Association of Cattle Farmers from Trikala, Mr. Voutselas.



Field technicians informing farmers about the project and providing the members of the ENSAIP with shepherd dogs.

The ENSAIP was constituted with about 35 stockbreeders of the areas of Antichasia, Koziakas and Puli. These networks will participate actively addressing the threat and simultaneously operating as mediators between the citizens and the relevant authorities, effectively treating this illegal practice and protecting biodiversity.

As part of the voluntary commitment signed by ARCTUROS and stockbreeders, the first will provide:

- Free legal assistance and advice to deal and combat poisoning. In case of complaint ARCTUROS assume all the costs.
- Technical advice about

measures to protect livestock and fight against illegal use of poisoned baits by specialized technicians.

- Technical and legal advice for legal control of stray dogs and cats, as well as for the control of predators (wolf, bear).
- Provision of a pair of Greek collie if possible.
- Organization of lectures on livestock farming, the problems and the prospects in the region.

Stock breeders, who officially declared their participation in the program, agreed that the illegal use of poisoned baits is a very harmful practice for the environment and conservation of biodiversity and is a public health

problem because it endangers the lives of the local people.

Stockbreeders, in turn, will commit to:

- Cooperate with ARCTUROS and the relevant authorities in the fight against illegal use of poisons
- Inform the technician of ARCTUROS on time in case of poisoning or suspicious use of poison appears in their ownership or pastures,
- Ensure that every dog is identified with a microchip.

ARCTUROS - Continental Greece
Freephone Against Poison
80011010101

Technical assistances for farmers in Idanha-a-Nova

Within the frame of the ENSAIP, technicians from Quercus implemented a series of actions to help farmers to solve a conflict with feral and abandoned dogs.



Hunting dogs are often abandoned in the field after the hunting season, causing problems and conflicts between hunters and farmers, as they attack cattle. Such problems may end up being solved with the use of poison to put an end with predation.

To avoid this, technicians from

Quercus designed and built a cage to help farmers to control these feral dogs. According to the Portuguese law, the dogs that are caught are sent to the municipality shelter under supervision of the local veterinary.

The commitment of farmers collaborating with the project

ensures the fight against illegal poisoning in the field. By joining the ENSAIP and signing the agreement against poison, farmers make clear their position against the use of poisoned baits and benefit from free technical services and assistance provided by the project technicians.

Sheepdogs against poison

Fundacion Gypaetus promotes defense against predators on livestock farms providing shepherd dogs to members of the ENSAIP in Spain.



By donating shepherd dogs, the project in Spain promotes not only this traditional livestock management tool but also cooperation between stockbreeders and recovery of pure breeds raised specifically to take care and defend livestock against predators

Farmer from La Muela (Algodonales, Malaga Range pilot area) receiving a mastiff.

Open Days and public exhibitions of the European Canine Team in Spain

April has been the month for public exhibition of the Canine Team in the Spanish pilot areas. In collaboration with the City Councils, Fundación Gypaetus organized the project Open Days in Sierra Nevada, Sierra Mágina and Córdoba.



The European Canine Team in Güéjar Sierra (Sierra Nevada, Granada, Spain) with the Environmental servants and some of the assistants.

Do you want to see the dogs in action? Take a look at the press and TV coverage: [Mancha Real Viva!](#) and [Ideal Granada](#).

The Open Days consisted of an ornithological workshop and games where young and adults had the chance to learn about biodiversity, the food chain and hazard poison represents to endangered species. Workshops were followed by a gymkhana to teach children, with the help of

village elders, the species formerly more common in the pilot area, livestock breeds and game species.

After the project presentations, the public exhibitions of the European Canine Team took place in different areas close to the villages with the participation of Agents of the

Environment and the Andalusian Strategy for Eradication of poisoned baits. Attendees had the opportunity to see the work of these dogs, specifically trained to detect poisoned baits in the wild, before they continue the shows in other European countries.



NEWS

ENHAIP - European Network of Hunters Against Illegal Poisoning

Subsidies for Sustainable Management of Natural Environment in Andalusia

Hunters Societies are eligible for these grants announced by Regional Government of Andalusia (Spain). Signed collaboration agreements with organizations working in conservation may benefit the access to such subsidies. Being a member of the European Network of Hunters Against Poison will therefore represent an advantage. Fundación Gypaetus is currently holding meetings with the different Hunters societies members of the network to inform them and offer them assistance to complete the application.

Eligible projects include the construction of heaps, conditioned rabbit burrows, creating ponds or hedgerows and planting of grass, which benefit game species of wildlife in general.

More information:

Order of 16 March 2012 laying down the rules for awarding grants for the Sustainable Management of Natural Environment in Andalusia. [BOJA 56, 21/03/2012](#).

Presentation of the EHNAIP in Moura-Mourao-Barrancos

On December 2011, CEAI presented the LIFE IAP project in Amareleja, municipality of Moura (Portugal), during the X Fair of the Vine and the Wine, were more than 1.500 visitors passed by.

During the event it was signed the protocol between the local association of hunters - Associação de Caçadores da Freguesia de Amareleja - and the LIFE project. This association is responsible for the management of three hunting areas of the pilot area of Moura-Mourão-Barrancos, including more than 6.000 ha, and is now a member of the "European Network of Hunting Areas Against Illegal Poisoning".



Francisco Ferreira, president of the hunters association of Amareleja, during the signature with Tiago Ferro, vice-president of CEAI.



ENMAIP - European Network of Municipalities Against Illegal Poisoning

Courses of Interpreter of natural and cultural heritage

Knowing the resources is essential for its conservation. In collaboration with different groups of Rural Development and municipalities of the pilot areas, Fundación Gypaetus offers these courses to municipalities of the European Network of Municipalities Against Poison.

The training is taught by experts from Fundación Gypaetus, technicians from the groups of rural development, professionals from the tourism sector, members of the Spanish Ornithological Society, Technicians from the Centres for Tourism Initiatives and Employment Units.

The courses are free and intended for all audiences, especially unemployed people, active workers in the tourism sector, entrepreneurs and anyone

interested in learning about the natural and cultural heritage of their town and how to manage it as a resource for self-employment and boosting its region.

The training program includes lessons on Heritage Interpretation, Natural and Cultural Resources, design of touristic routes and employment opportunities. The course also includes a practical part with excursions where assistants will practice how to manage groups.



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